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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA'S PRESIDENT SEES LEGACY IN DARFUR

REF: LJUBLJANA 34

Classified By: COM Thomas B. Robertson for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1.(C) Summary: After two weeks of working his agenda on Darfur across Europe and in the US, President Janez Drnovsek appeared upbeat about the prospects for spurring renewed interest and commitment to resolving the humanitarian, security and political crises in that troubled region. He told COM that conversations with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, EU High Representative Javier Solana, French President Chirac, former President Bill Clinton, Chinese officials and a number of celebrities have convinced him that he is pushing on an open door. Drnovsek plans to run a full page advertisement in the New York Times the week of January 30 explaining his "The World for Darfur" initiative and hopes that many of the politicians and other eminent people who have responded positively to his overtures will agree to have their names included. Drnovsek also sees the US presidency of the UN Security Council as a window of opportunity to get all permanent member governments constructively engaged.

2.(C) Drnovsek gave COM his latest thinking on solutions for Kosovo and Montenegro. On Kosovo, he said it was important to move swiftly before the situation became too destabilized.

He thought the responsibilities of president and chief negotiator on status talks should be divided between Nexhat Daci who he thought could get support to become president and Hashim Thaci who could be brought constructively to the talks to act as chief negotiator. Anything else, Drnovsek said, would be too complicated. Drnovsek expressed frustration with the European Union on Montenegro saying it was not really trying to facilitate a legitimate referendum, rather it was hoping to continue delaying what Drnovsek sees as inevitable.

He suggested that Solana should seriously consider some of Drnovsek's past proposals (Reftel) including a union or association of Serbia and Montenegro as two independent states.

13. (U) President Drnovsek also related the unique and fascinating chance he had to be singled out by Bolivia's new president Evo Morales to accompany him throughout his day of indigenous inauguration. According to Drnovsek - "every kid in Bolivia knows who I am and where Slovenia is" now. Finally, President Drnovsek discussed his plans for a new, a-political, independent movement to support his drive to raise Slovene interest in volunteerism and responsibility, as a relatively wealthy nation, to care for the welfare of the less fortunate, both at home and abroad. End Summary.

14. (C) President Janez Drnovsek invited COM to lunch Friday January 27, shortly after his return from Bolivian President Morales' inauguration and brief stopover in New York. Drnovsek has been engaged the last six months searching for issues on which he can have influence and a positive impact. Having been roundly rebuffed by the Serbs in October 2005 on his nine point plan for Kosovo, and finding little traction on Montenegro, Drnovsek has expanded his vision further afield.

15. (C) Drnovsek's approach to Darfur is three-fold. First, he sees a need to address the holes that exist in the current humanitarian response. Second, he sees that securing a safe environment is part of the key to addressing his first point and thirdly, Drnovsek would like to address what he sees as a political stalemate in the talks in Abuja. On all of this, Drnovsek assured the Ambassador, he has the support of Prime Minister Janez Jansa who has agreed to commit resources to Drnovsek's activities. Understanding the clear limitations of Slovenia's ability to impact the Darfur situation on its own, Drnovsek has set about building support in Europe and the U.S. A visit to the President's website (www.up-rs.si) where letters are posted from Senator Hillary Clinton, Amnesty International activist Bianca Jagger and the President of Iceland among others, reveals growing support for his efforts.

16. (C) Beginning in early January 2006, Drnovsek started laying the domestic groundwork for his Darfur initiative. He met with the larger NGOs resident in Slovenia: Karitas,

LJUBLJANA 00000066 002 OF 004

Together Foundation, Red Cross, UNICEF and others to determine what Slovenia could usefully do to help alleviate the humanitarian situation in Darfur. The initial plan to establish a refugee camp in Chad to assist up to 10,000 displaced persons may have been overly ambitious for Slovenia, and, perhaps not an urgent need. During lunch Drnovsek suggested that Slovenia would send its mobile hospital to Darfur and that he had heard already from a number of physicians volunteering to donate time to the endeavor. He did not elaborate on when the mobile hospital would be dispatched nor for how long it would remain on the ground.

17. (C) Drnovsek talked about his plans to visit Sudan and said that his trip had been postponed to February. Recently, he had heard again from the Government of Sudan that it would like him to delay his travel until March. This clearly dismayed Drnovsek who said it would be key to keeping momentum on Darfur for him to be able to do something in February. He said he had spoken twice with former President Clinton about visiting Darfur, and Clinton had expressed interest, though the February timing would not work for him. COM mentioned that former President George H.W. Bush had teamed up with President Clinton both on the tsunami relief and New Orleans relief. Drnovsek said he would like to reach out to former President George H.W. Bush and also to former Secretary of State Powell. (Note: Post will assist

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President Drnovsek in getting the correct contact information.)

18. (C) Other immediate calls to action by Drnovsek include urging Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi to dispatch the promised 3000 troops to the border region between Chad and Sudan, and to use his good contacts with both Khartoum and the Sudanese rebels to play a constructive role. Drnovsek has also called upon French President Jaques Chirac to bolster troop levels at its base in Chad and to help that government to protect the border between Chad and Sudan. Drnovsek believes these two actions could be taken quickly, more quickly certainly

than any potential UN action. He said the Libyan troops could augment African Union (AU) troops already deployed and French forces could be placed within the existing NATO operation.

¶9. (C) Because he feared being put off too long on his Sudan visit, Drnovsek said he would be dispatching the Chief of Slovenia's intelligence services as his personal envoy for Sudan on Saturday, January 28. Podbregar has a long association with Drnovsek having been his national security advisor when Drnovsek was Prime Minister. He will carry a personal message from Drnovsek to President Bashir. According to Drnovsek, Bashir spent time in Slovenia during the Yugoslavia years and speaks some Slovenian (NFI). Drnovsek drew a comparison between President Bashir and former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, saying just as Milosevic had come out of Bosnia as a peacemaker and missed the chance to do the same on Kosovo, Bashir has improved his credibility with the North-South agreement, but is risking everything by not doing the right thing on Darfur.

Kosovo: Separate the Power

¶10. (C) Drnovsek attended Kosovo President Rugova's funeral on Thursday, January 26 where he had a chance to meet with Solana, Hashim Thaci and opposition leader Veton Surroi. He said that Kosovo Assembly President Nexhat Daci would be visiting Ljubljana the week of January 30. Drnovsek expressed a deep concern that too much politicking on succession would be destabilizing and that a good solution would be to split Rugova's duties by making Daci President, and Thaci chief negotiator. He said Surroi was less supportive of this idea than Thaci since he clearly has designs on both jobs for himself. Drnovsek asked if the USG would give this idea some serious consideration. COM pledged to pass it along.

¶11. (C) On Montenegro, Drnovsek's firm belief in the right to self determination is apparent. He is frustrated by the EU's approach saying it does not really want the Montenegrins to hold a referendum on independence and is employing a series of delay tactics which he suggests is partly motivated by the

LJUBLJANA 00000066 003 OF 004

desire to limit the proliferation of "small" countries in Europe and in the future, the European Union. With the termination of the current agreement not to hold a referendum set to expire on February 7, Drnovsek is anxious for the EU to engage more seriously on resolving this question. He says it should use a 40% (the Danish solution; see reftel) threshold for winning the referendum, because moving it any higher would clearly favor the opposition and moving it any lower would clearly favor the Government. 40% is a good compromise.

Expanding Slovenia's Global Identity

¶12. (U) Just prior to lunch, President Drnovsek had held a press conference in which he outlined his plans for helping the situation in Darfur and the launch of his Movement for Justice and Development. When asked during a press briefing if this was some sort of new political movement along the lines of former President Kucan's Forum 21, Drnovsek replied negatively saying it was open to all sorts of people and was not meant to be a political movement. Beyond saying he wanted to motivate Slovenians to become more engaged in philanthropic activities, Drnovsek did not reveal much about how he hopes to pursue this goal going forward.

Bolivia - Unexpected Honor

¶13. (SBU) Drnovsek had absolutely no explanation for why he, a white European from a country with few ties to Latin America, let alone Bolivia, was plucked out of the crowd to accompany Evo Morales during his indigenous inaugural ceremonies. Drnovsek was clearly moved by the experience and feels a deep connection to Bolivia and its people.

Comment

¶13. (C) There has been much speculation on Drnovsek's motives for engagement on Darfur. Frank discussion in an interview for a Croatian newspaper in early January regarding his serious and ongoing health concerns may offer some deeper context to his recent forays into high profile global issues such as Kosovo and Darfur. Drnovsek is clearly not in good health, but when asked pointedly about his health he either ignores the question as he did with CNN's Finoula Sweeney, or he claims that his departure from conventional medical treatment and reliance on a positive attitude and homeopathic ministrations is having an extremely beneficial effect. You only need witness his recent travel schedule, he says, to see he is not a sick man. While advancing metastases to his lungs and liver may be adding urgency to Drnovsek's actions on Kosovo and Darfur, an awakening sense of Slovenia's global obligations is also evident in Drnovsek's public comments on everything from Kosovo to Darfur to Slovenia's commitment to send trainers to Iraq.

¶14. (C) In the last six months, Drnovsek has clearly, and perhaps consciously, been making the transition from politician to statesman. According to current President of the Liberal Democrats (LDS) and European parliamentarian, Jelko Kacin, Drnovsek called January 30 from a visit to Romania to say he was leaving the LDS once and for all. (NB: Drnovsek had "frozen" his membership when he was elected President in 2002). This move was also announced in a one line posting on his web-site. This, claims Kacin, is further evidence that the President is not really himself any more. On the one hand, Kacin appears stung by what can only be interpreted as a withdrawal of support for the LDS under his leadership by the very popular Drnovsek. On the other hand, Kacin is giving voice to concerns, shared by others, that the President, a person in an office without significant resources will not be able to deliver in a concrete way, making his initiatives appear more or less useless, and damaging Slovenia's reputation at the same time. It is no secret there is a serious lack of communication between the

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President's office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Drnovsek claims the full support of Prime Minister Jansa, it is clear that Drnovsek has not invested any time in clearing this with FM Rupel. That said, the MFA has come out

LJUBLJANA 00000066 004 OF 004

to say it supports Drnovsek's Darfur initiative.

¶15. (C) Politics aside, Drnovsek is doing what we would hope the leader of a small, central European, new EU member country might do. He is demonstrating to his own citizens and to Europe, the US and beyond, that a small, democratic country, with modest resources but a global perspective can have an impact on important issues. It's possible he has bit off a little more than he can chew, but Drnovsek's timing is right, and he has struck a chord in the international community. Post is working with the Department to ensure Drnovsek has the benefit of U.S. views on the challenges and way forward in Darfur. We are working on a digital video conference between Africa Bureau principals and President Drnovsek for February 1. We will also include, on the Slovenian side, representation from the MFA.
ROBERTSON